

Prof. P. DIEPGEN

Emil Noeggerath

for the hundredth anniversary of his
birthday on October 5th
nineteenhundred and twenty seven

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Mit freundlichen Grüssen des Verfassers!

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to Capt. Technische Sanität

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By Prof. P. DIEPGEN.

When NOEGGERATH died on May third eighteen hundred and ninty five, the scientific world did not take the notice due to the importance of his personality and his contribution to medicin. Ten years before he had returned to his home Germany, from the country that experienced his most efficacious work, Amerika. He now lived without a professorship. in daily practice, doing research work in private. It is then, when people are easily forgotten. On October fifth will be the hundredth anniversary of his birthday, it is the time for an objective historic appreciation. I thought it a good thing to talk in front of an assembly that will certainly contribute to bring about the former good understanding from one country and people to another about a man whose heart belonged to the New World as well as to the Old and who did them both credit.

NOEGGERATH came from a well known minors family. His father was professor of the Science of Minig and Mineralogy in Bonn ; he was very gifted, had experience of life and a broad education. He was in personal connection with Goethe and with well known scholars of his time. NOEGGERATHS home was a centre of manysided spiritual interests and a liberal political attitude. In his student years (eighteen fourty eight to fifty three) in Bonn, — it was the time when the way from the natural philosophical to the natural scientific medicin had been discovered — he got the first stimulation for the exact natural scientific method and the endeavour to thoroughly enlarge the hospital experience by pathologic-anatomical and microscopical research, and this has been characteristic for him. After he got his degree, he accomplished his education and training by travels and studies in Berlin, Vienna, Prag and Paris. Then he became assistent at the obstetriacal hospital in Bonn under KILIAN. I am exceedingly sorry that for lack of time I cannot enter more into details about the very interesting years of his studies and about his equally interesting teachers. Already in eighteen hundred fifty six he settled down as practicing physician in Neuwied on the Rhine. — In the beginning of eighteen fifty seven a professorship was offered to him in St. Louis where a new medical college was to be founded. When he reached the New World after a troublesame and dangerous passage on board of a sailing boat, the untertaking had proved to be a financial failure ; so NOEGGERATH had to settle down as a physician in New York. He had to overcome tremendous difficulties, but dispite of the frailness of his health, which he fought with utmost energy, he succeeded in his aims. His qualifications as obstetrical help and specialist for women made his renown and soon he was asked for as consiliarus. So his entry to the specialised field came about quite naturally. Without an extensive special-medical training according to our ideas he had become a famous specialist for women. He was soon appointed physician at the gynaecological department several important hospitals and Professor of Gynaecology and Obstetric at «New York Medical College». His courses were especially renow-

ned for his ability as a surgeon. As a rule thirth to fourty young doctors took part in them.

With ABRAHAM JACOBI, the pediator, he was on especially good terms ; like him NOEGGERATH became a linking factor between American and German medecin. It is true, though, that the Americans did not always altogether appreciate his German thoroughness, and in Germany he met with a certain mistrust in answer to his new message from abroad. It is this that often made him feel sore, though he was frequently honoured by German and American societies as well as by others. In eighteen eighty five he was obliged to return to Germany on account of his health. He took residence in Wiesbaden, where on May eighteen ninety five he died of a nephritis chronica, which ever since his early days had forced him to stop in his work every now and then.

As far as time permits, I shall try to show his contribution to the splendid and unheard development and rise of gynaecology in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is not so much a question of mentioning that part of his work that remained as lasting possession in medecin. An historical appreciation will also follow the path of error and show what parts of his work were receptivly grasped by the spirit of his time.

In the middle of last century the gynaecologists were the ones to start but slowly to work at the female genitales in pathological anatomy and historical changes. In this NOEGGERATH was entirely modern. In the meetings of the obstretic union of New York and of the American Society for gynaecology he discussed pathological problems with preference, reported on postmortem conditions and demonstrated preparations. In eighteen eighty he established his opinion that certain ovarialkystoms emerge from the tissue which form the capillary blood vessels. It was the problem of cancer that attracted him towards the end of his life. Questions about the parasitical origin were then of special interest. In a monography, beautifully got up and printed with serious financial sacrifice only, he developed his ideas. He denied the parasitical genese and developed the theory that for reasons unknown to us differences of stowage occur in the epithelium cell between two different substances, one staining blue, the other staining read, (kyanophile and erythro-phile), that give an egglike constitution to it, simultancously innondating the cell with kernelsubstance. His theory was here linking in with the biological theories of HANSEMANN and AUERBACH. So his ideas show to be scientifically based on his time. According to his own words, he was especially interested in **bacteriology**. In eighteen seventy two he thought, he had almost cultivated the mikrobium of gonorrhoea, but gave up his experiments, when he found the hypomicetes forming spores also with children, not suffering with clap. Eighteen eighty six he affirmed the originating connection of a bacillus thoroughly studied in cultivation and in experiments on animals, with puerperal fever. At the Naturforscherversammlung in Wiesbaden one year later, he demonstrated the experiment to discriminate bacteriums by colour, which they first take from a greyish-black nutrient medium, prepared into gelatine by all sorts of Anilin colours, corresponding to the spectre of the sun. — Nowadays this precursor of modern methods of investigation with the help of coloured nutrient medium is entirely forgotten.

NOEGGERATH's main importance is doubtless in the clinical field. Practicing at the huge material of a metropolis that was put at his disposal by private practice and hospitals, he had large opportunities to gather experience and to apply his discriminating eye as a physician. Again and again he took up *obstetrical problems* — they were already his first endeavours while assistent under KILIAN — the problem of the intrauterin death of foetus by twisting of the umbilical string, pathological conditions of the foetus, the technic of artificial premature birth, application of Ergotin preparations, suture of the prineal tear and many others which I cannot enter into here. In *gynaecological diag-*

nostic he enlarged the methods of palpation by introduction of digital investigation through the bladder and the hooking in of the uterus in feeling the adnexe. NOEGGERATH was also an early representant of microscopical investigation of particles of tissue removed from the uterus. NOEGGERATHS short articles and publications in the line of *conservativ gynaecology* are numerous. Certain though he felt as operating surgeon, his conscientiousness always warned him, to prefer the dangerless proceeding to the dangerous one. He severely criticised the uncritical inclination, to operate and shows the dangers that are also in plainer diagnostical and therapeutical operative procedures. One case where he succeeded in removing *manûel* a twelve year old inveterated, *inversio uteri* got a certain renown in literature. In a time, when the Curette was still rejected by important authorities he recommended her, together with SIMON and others, to remove proliferations of the mucose uteri. The conservativ treatment of the fibrome by galvanic current, recommended by APOSTOLI met with his special interest, though he was fully aware of the purely symptomatic success of the method. He extended the field of indication also unto other tumours. However, he did not succeed in changing the «reluctant» reception of this way of treatment in Germany into a more confident one. Several attempts, to improve the instrumentarium of the conservativ gynaecology show his technical ability.

He approached operativ treatment with the entire consciousness of responsibility which in the days of beginning of modern technic and antisepsis a physician would feel obliged to still more than in our days. NOEGGERATH is among those who first realised the importance of Lister and gave heart and soul for his ideas. Being convinced of transference of gonorrhoea by fingers and instruments, he demands in eighteen seventy two the utmost asepsis even for an ordinary investigation. Reading his methods of disinfection one has to admit, that they are on a much higher scale than those appearing two years later in the first edition of the operativ gynaecology by HEGAR-KALTENBACH. It is almost pathetic to read those passages where he describes the troublesome preparations for antiseptic operations in a private house. He has an active part in various directions in the development of the theory of the operation of prolapsus ovariotomy and total exstirpation of the uterus. The high percentage of mortality, however, influenced him over and over again, to limit operative activity. In the eightieth regular mischief was done with surgical treatment of the laceration of *cervix rent*, since EMMET had drawn attention to it. To us it seems almost amusing, to see mentioned salivation, epilepsia, convulsions, dementia, and other mental diseases among the twenty-six so called consequences that NOEGGERATH gathers from literature. He opposed this in eighteen eighty seven in Wiesbaden and declared the laceration of cervix uteri for a harmless accessory condition. Renowned gynaecologists, like SAENGER, SKUTCH, AHLFELD and FEHLING opposed him, only HEGAR agreed with him; time proved, he was right.

What in due reason made NOEGGERATHS renown, are his investigations on gonorrhoea and her secondary diseases in women. It was in a time when according to PASTEUR and LISTER the connection of contagious diseases with a living virus was presumed with good reason, but when the medical world was still far from clear perception of the process and — as with NOEGGERATH himself — the genius epidemicus loci held an important place — it was then, when NOEGGERATH issued his first publications on the subject. This was in eighteen seventy two, three years before ROBERT KOCH founded the modern bacteriological methods of experiment, and seven years before NEISSER discovered the gonococcus. As he himself was far too critical, to consider the hypomycetes, discovered by him, as ætiological factor, he was entirely dependent on his clinical observations which he enlarged by pathological conditions, in stating diagnoses. The result is an exact description of the secondary diseases of gonorrhoea that in their essential lines are still valid

nowadays. According to NOEGGERATH it is a characteristicum that the infection with this so called «latent» gonorrhoea takes place without any symptoms. She climbs up through the genital tractus, lined with mucous membrane and remains alive in the tubes while she heals in all other parts. Proceeding from the tube the disaster takes its beginning, the process transgressing to the perimetrium. The perimetrium is the only way. Only later on NOEGGERATH recognices also the participation of the parametrium for the spreading of mixed infections. According to the way in which the extension, proceeding from the tube takes place, NOEGGERATH discriminates four kinds. The acute perimetritis *del* occurs post partum or during menstrual period with a foudroyant peritonitis or without exterior influence after peristaltic movement of the tube which can be caused by a mental shock or even by gynaecological investigation and therapeutical procedures and may under certain circumstances lead to a quick death or to abscesses and *exsûdtations*. In the recurring perimetritis, the whole process repeats itself in more or less regular and acute outbursts. The third is the chronic perimetritis that gradually develops peritonitic agglutination and cordformation with consecutiv dislocations of organs. Finally of a more secondary nature OOPHORITIS, which shows the participation of the ovaries in this process. Cardinal symptoms of all these forms are irregularities of the menses, bleeding and discharge. It will always be a special merit of NOEGGERATH to have pointed at the importance of gonorrhoea for the sterility in married life, as no gynaecologist did before him. The principle, still valid to day, never to begin the treatment of a sterile woman until the sperm of the man is thoroughly investigated, derives from him. In later years he did not maintain his original pessimistic conviction that in 90 % of the cases a woman was infected by a nominally healed man and gonorrhoea was altogether incurable. But, however pessimistic his ideas were, he was always keen on taking up treatment. To a great extend and with due reason his ways of proceeding are still practiced to day.

It is certain, though, that he looked upon many cases as being gonorrhoea which were really of different geneses. He himself was aware of the difficulty of diagnosis and hoped for certainly only from a future prove of a specific contagium. When NEISSERS gonococcus was discovered, he, however, pointed out with due reason that with a woman a negativ statment again gives no certainty.

The far too extreem standpoint did a lot to the slow recognition of NOEGGERATH'S discovery, though OHLSHAUSEN soon gave due credit to it. When HENNING on November 17th eighteen hundred seventy three backed his ideas in the Leipzig society for obstetric help, he only met with opposition. JOSEF AMANN in Munic and the Englishman AUGUST MACDONALD were but isolated in their approval. In America the pamphlet was hardly recogniced, because written in German. When NOEGGERATH gave a special lecture on the subject in front of an American society, he met with unanimous rejection. One of his opponents said disgustedly, there would be no end to the consequences, when the Canadian ladies would learn that their sterility was caused by a previous disease of their husbands. The president's opinion, however, was, if NOEGGERATH was right this lecture ought to be published in every sunday school library.

Twelve years after the first publications only a new epoc began in the judgment of NOEGGERATH and the appreciation of the secondary conditions of gonorrhoea in women with a lecture by SAENGER at the meeting of natural scientists in Magdeburg. Instead of the four kinds as distinguished bij NOEGGERATH he essentially gave our modern division. When he compared NOEGGERATH to SEMMELWEIS, he met with no disapproval.

The comparison is justified. Only SEMMELWEISS' work could extend and take effect into a much larger field than the discovery of NOEGGERATH. The lines of thought that link in with their clinical observations is, very alike in

both scholars. Alike in both was also their conscientiousness and love for mankind ; it is the leading and inspiring factor in their work. NOEGGERATH has words of highest ethical earnestness when he shows the responsibility of marriage to men, previously diseased of gonorrhoea. Care for the future wife and mother make him an early fighter for social work for women. The fate of being misunderstood and undervalued was also for both men alike. There was sneering at NOEGGERATH as well as at SEMMELWEIS, though NOEGGERATH lived to see himself recognised and before his death he even experienced the pleasure of seeing the conversion of one of his most marked enemies in New York, T. G. THOMAS, by a letter of him. A kind understanding for the weaknesses of mankind, his unshakable energy and love for knowledge helped him, to overcome previous deceptions. What he did and accomplished will only be duly appreciated when one realises the tremendous difficulties he had to overcome. He kept himself awake at night by drinking coffee and putting is fect into cold water under his writing desk. He made all his investigations in his private laboratory which he kept up by private means besides his vast practice. The luxury of an institute furnished by the State has never been at his disposal. He certainly deserves a place of honour in the ranks of the leading gynaecologists of the second half of the nineteenth century not only on account of his discovery of the secondary diseases of female gonorrhoea and the fecundation of various specialised fields in gynaecology, but also as an ideal personality in its finest sense.
